The Craft (Witchcraft - NOT to be confused with Satanism. A true Witch has nothing to do with this, even though there are some Satanists who (unrightfully) call themselves "Witch".) contains a large number of groups with bonds to each other, for the most part, which are looser than those you will find between Christian churches. Each has it's own traditions, it's own beliefs, it's own panthion, etc. So just WHAT is it that, overall, a Witch believes in? The American Council of Witches was formed to determine what it was that all Witches have in common, belief-wise. In the early 1970's, a paper was released with their findings, and gives a good overall picture of it. The following is the text of that paper.

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_BASIC_PRINCIPLES_OF_THE_CRAFT_

1. The first principle is that of love, and it is expressed in the ethic,
"DO AS YOU WILL, SO LONG AS YOU HARM NONE"
   a) love is not emotional in it's essence, but is an attribute of the individual as expressed in relation to other beings;
   b) harming others can be by thought, word, or deed;
   c> it is to be understood the "none" includes oneself;
   d) the harm which is to be regarded as unethical is gratuitous harm; war, in general, is gratuitous harm, although it is ethical to defend oneself and one's liberty when threatened by real and present danger, such as defense against invasion.

2. The Witch must recognize and harmonize with the forces of the universe, in accord with the Law of Polarity: everything is dual; everything has two poles; everything has it's opposite; for every action there is a reaction; all can be categorized as either active or reactive in relation to other things.
   a) Godhead is one unique and transcendant wholeness, beyond any limitations or expressions; thus, it is beyond our human capacity to understand and identify with this principle of Cosmic Oneness, except as It is revealed to us in terms of It's attributes and operation.

b) The most basic and meaningful attribute of the One that we, as humans, can relate to and understand, is that of polarity, of action and reaction; therefore Witches recognize the Oneness of the Divinity, but worship and relate to the Divine as the archetypal polarity of God and Goddess, the All-Father and the Great Mother of the universe. The Beings are as near as we can approach to the One within our human limitations of understanding and expression, though it is possible to experience the divine Oneness through the practices of the Mysteries.

c) Harmony does not consist of the pretty and the nice, but the balanced, dynamic, poised co-operation and co-relation.

3. The Witch must recognize, and operate within the framework of the Law of Cause and Effect; every action has it's reaction, and every effect has it's cause. All things occur according to this law; nothing in the universe can occur outside this law, though we may not always appreciate the relation between a given effect and it's cause. Subsidiary to this is the Law of Three, which states that whatever goes forth must return threefold, whether of good or ill; for our actions affect more than people generally realize, and the resulting reactions are also part of the harvest.

4. As Above, So Below. That which exists in the Macrocosm exists, on a smaller scale and to a lesser degree, in the Microcosm. The powers of the universe exist also in the human, though in general instance they lie dormant. The powers and abilities can be awakened and used if the proper techniques are practiced, and this is why initiates of the Mysteries are sworn to guard the secrets from the unworthy: Much harm can be done by those who have power without responsibility, both to others and to themselves according to the Laws of Cause and Effect and of Threefold Return.

a) Since our philosophy teaches that the universe is the physical manifestation of the Divine, there can be nothing in the universe which does not partake of the nature of the Divine; hence, the powers and attributes of the Divine exist also in the manifest, though to much smaller degree.

b) These powers can be awakened through the various techniques of the Mysteries, and, although they are only capable of small effects in and of themselves, it is possible to use them in order to draw upon the forces of the universe. Thus humanity can be the wielders of the power of the Gods, a channel for Godhead to act within It's own manifestation. This, then, is further reason for the oath of secrecy.

c) Since the universe is the body of the One, possessing the same attributes as the One, it's Laws must be the principles through and by which the One operates. By reasoning from the known to the unknown, one can learn of the Divine, and thus of oneself. Thus the Craft is a natural religion, seeing in Nature the expression and revelation of Divinity.

5. We know that everything in the universe is in movement or vibration and is a function of that vibration. Everything vibrates; all things rise and fall in a tidal system that reflects the motion inherent in the universe and also in the atom. Matter and energy are but two poles of one continuous phenomenon. Therefore the Witch celebrates, harmonizes with, and makes use of the tides of the universe and of life as expressed through the cycle of the seasons and the motion of the solar system. These ritual observances are the eight great Festivals of the Year, referred to as the Wheel of the Year. Further, the Witch works with the forces and tides of the Moon, for this body is the mediator of much energy to our planet Earth and thus to ourselves.

6. Nothing is dead matter in the universe. All things exist, therefore all things live, though perhaps in a different manner from that which we are used to calling life. In view of this, the Witch knows that there is no true death, only change from one condition to another. The universe is the body of Godhead, and therefore possesses one transcendant consciousness; all things partake of the consciousness, in varying levels of trance/awareness.

a) Because of this principle, all things are sacred to the Witch, for all

partake of the one Life.

b) Therefore the Witch is a natural ecologist, for Nature is part of us as we are a part of Nature.

7. Astrology can be useful in marking and interpreting the flow and ebb of the tides of our solar system, and thus of making use of those tides; astrology should not be debased into mere fortune-telling.

8. Throughout the development of the human race, civilizations have seen and worshipped many and various attributes of the Divine. These universal forces have been clothed in forms which were expressive to the worshipper of the attribute of the Godhead which they expressed. Use of these symbolic representations of the natural and divine forces of the universe, or godforms, is a potent method for contacting and utilizing the forces they represent. Thus the Gods are both natural and truely divine, and man-made in that the forms with which they are clothed are products of humanity's striving to know the Godhead.

a) In keeping with the Law of Polarity, these god-forms are brought into harmony by the one great Law which states: All Gods are one God. All Goddesses are one Goddess. There is one Initiator. This law is an expression of our understanding that all of the forces of the universe, by whatever ethnic god-form is chosen to clothe and relate to whichever force, can be resolved into the fundamental polarity of the Godhead, the Great Mother and the All-Father.

b) It is the use of differing godforms, of differing ethnic sources or periods, which is the basis of many of the differences between the various Traditions of the Craft. Each Tradition uses the forms, and thus the names, which to that Tradition best express and awaken an understanding of the force represented, according to the areas of emphasis of the Tradition.

c) Because we know that differing names or representations are but expressions of the same divine principles and forces, we require our members to swear that they will never mock the names by which another honors the Divine, even though those names be different from and seemingly less expressive than the names and godforms used by our

Tradition (for to the members of another Tradition, using it's names, ours may easily seem equally less expressive).

9. A Witch refuses to allow her/himself to be corrupted by the great guilt neuroses which have been foisted on humanity in the name of the Divine, thus freeing the self of the slavery of the mind. The Witch expresses responsibility for her/his actions, and accepts the consequences of them; guilt is rejected as inhibiting to one's self-actualization, and replaced by the efforts of the Witch to obey the teachings of harmlessness, responsibility for the consequences of one's actions, and the goal of actualizing the full powers of the individual.

a) We refuse to believe that a human being is born innately sinful, and recognize the the concepts of sin and guilt are tremendously inhibiting to the human potential; the consequences of the Law of Cause and Effect, called karma by some, are not punishment, but the recurrences of situations and their effects because the individual as not gained the Wisdom needed to handle or avoid such situations.

b) There is no heaven except that which we ourselves make of our life on Earth, and likewise there is no hell except the effects of our unwise actions. Death is not followed by punishment or reward, but by life and the continuing evolution of the human potential.

c) One cannot damn the divine in oneself; one can, however, cut oneself off from it through the rejection of wisdom and a refusal to strive for self-realization. This cutting off does not lead to personal suffering in "hell", for there is no Self to suffer if the tie to one's own divinity has been severed; what remains is merely an empty shell, a "personality" or thought-form devoid of it's ensouling Spark of the Divine Fire.

10. We know of the existence of the life-force which ensouls all living things, that is, all that exists. We know that a spark of this Divine Fire is within each and every thing that exists, and that it does not die; only the form of it's existence changes. We know that this spark of

the life-force returns to manifestation again and again in order to fully realize and actualize it's potential, evolving finally to the peak and essence of existence which is pure be-ing. In this process of reincarnation each form returns in the same type of form, though it's ever-increasing actualization may lead to higher levels of existence of that form. Man returns as man, cat as feline, mineral as mineral, each class of form evolving as the individual forms of that class evolve.

11. This process of evolution through successive incarnations in manifest form works through the utilizations of wisdom gained, the essence of the life-experience. This essence of experience, or Wisdom, is an attribute of the spark of life itself, one and inseparable (see 9a).

12. We must care for the body, for it is the vehicle of the spark of life, the form by which we attain. Thus we must heal the body of it's ills and keep it a tuned and perfected tool; so must we heal others (both physicaly and psychologically) as far as it is within our power to do so. However, we cannot interfere with the life of another, even to heal, except at their request or with their express permission; unless such non-interference would be inhibiting to our own, ethical existence and development -- and even then the responsibilities and consequences must be understood and accepted. This, then, is one of the important reasons for the communal life the Witches under the guidance of the Priesthood: That the group may be guided by wisdom and experience, with the aid and support of one's peers; and that one's actions may be guided by the influence of the ethical life of the group as a whole.

13. Harmony with, and utilization of, the great natural forces of the universe is called magick. By magick we speak, not of the supernatural, but of the superbly natural, but whose laws and applications are not as yet recognized by the scientific establishment. The Witch must strive to recognize these forces, learn their laws, attune her/himself to them, and make use of them. The Witch must also be aware that power corrupts when

used _only_ for the gains of the self, and therefore must strive to serve
humanity: Either through the service in the Priesthood, or by example and
effects of his/her life on others. The choice must be made in accord with
the true nature of the Witch.